

# SCOTLAND'S STORY

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**Iona's claim  
the amazing  
Book of Kells**

**MacAlpin: the  
king who came  
from nowhere**

**At last: the  
truth about  
the Stone**

**Exploring the  
myth of our  
Irish origin**

**Munro's steep  
climb to fame**



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ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

**574**

Aedan Mac Gabrainn the warrior king of the Gaels is inaugurated at Dunadd.



**650**

Senchus Fer an Alban, the Gaels tax ledger, details the sea power of the kingdom of Dál Riata.



**800**

Around this time the Book of Kells is created on Iona. Kenneth MacAlpin is born in Dál Riata



**839**

The Vikings slay the Pictish Royal family in battle.



**843**

Traditional date for Kenneth MacAlpin uniting the Gaels and the Picts. In fact, MacAlpin was still fighting a civil war for the kingdom of the Picts at the time.



**858**

Kenneth MacAlpin, King of the Picts, dies at his palace in Forteviot, south-west of Perth.



**849**

The Gaels remove the relics of their saints east to Pictland.



**877-8**

First recorded use of the Stone of Destiny, the symbol of Scottish kingship



**In Part 6:  
Scotland's  
forgotten  
hero king**

PART OF  
IRELAND

North  
Channel

PART  
ENGLAND



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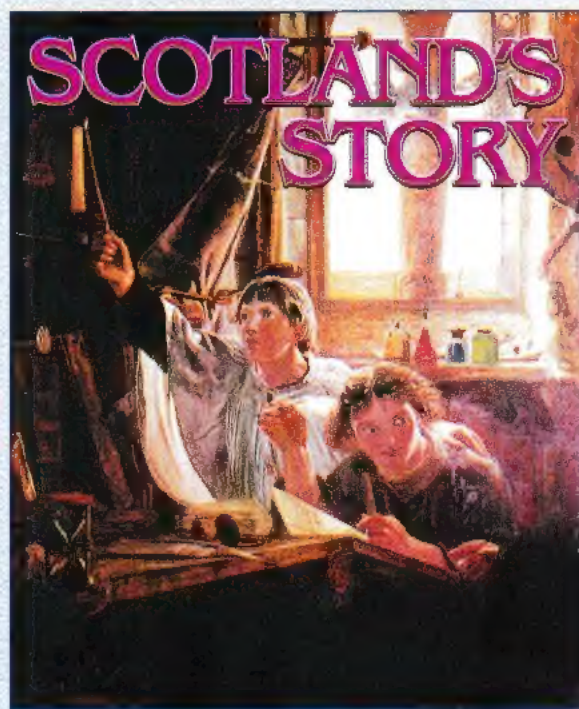
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## SCOTLAND'S STORY



**COVER:** Scribes at work in the 8th century. A depiction by the 19th century artist, Scott.

## It's a Stone certainty

It is difficult to ever be certain what happened centuries ago, particularly when the evidence is slim and circumstantial, or the facts are obscured by the myths of time.

Happily, now and then the opportunity arises to carry out a detailed, expert and conclusive examination of an ancient object.

So it has been with the Stone of Destiny, the ancient coronation seat of our kings which recently returned to Scotland.

The Stone in Edinburgh Castle is the real one.

Of course this means that the daring raiders who removed it from Westminster Abbey in the Fifties also had the real Stone.

And that's another story...

We have reached the last of the five peoples who made up our nation, the sea raiders who established the kingdom of Dál Riata. We have always been told they came from Ireland but it appears they were in Scotland all along.

In many ways, these Gaels were an unlikely lot to emerge as the dominant force in the land.

But it would be wrong to see any of these early nations – the Picts, Britons, Angles, Vikings and Gaels

– as biologically distinct. They raided each other for slaves, exchanged brides and were extremely mixed. Were it not for fashions in clothing and haircuts, they would have been physically indistinguishable.

Attempts to prove otherwise seem to promote a racist vision of history which is not only factually wrong but legitimises and promotes racism in the present.

We know that the use of the word race in history is a slip easily and usually innocently made, but it must be guarded against.

It now seems likely that the Book of Kells, that masterpiece of Celtic art, was started on Iona late in the 8th century or early in the 9th.

To produce such a work required a stable monastic community with a large number of scribes and artists, just like Iona, which has the scribe Connachtach recorded as working on the Book.

Iona was subject to a series of Viking raids from 795 to 849, and at some time during this period the Book was probably moved to Kells.

It survives as a testament to the shared endeavour of Gaels in Scotland and Ireland to save the legacy of Columba.









# A Gael force wind of change

**Of the five peoples who made up our nation, the Gaels were the most successful. They gave Scotland its name, its form of Christianity and a line of kings that lasted a thousand years**

**S**cotland derives its name from the people known to the writers of the Roman Empire as the Scots – Scotti in the Latin language which they used to write their accounts. As with other major European nations whose name is based on a 'barbarian' group from outside the Roman Empire, such as England (the Angles) and France (the Franks), the Scots were just one of a number of peoples inhabiting the country, but one which became dominant and whose name came to represent the country they inhabited.

In the 5th and 6th centuries, when we first hear of kings and kingdoms emerging, the Scots were confined to the area of modern Argyll, ancient Dál Riata. To the east and north lay the Picts, to the south the Britons, and in the south-east, the Angles.

Traditional stories and genealogies tell how Scottish Dál Riata was founded in the early 6th century by the Irish king Fergus Mor and his sons, who colonised Argyll from north Antrim, the area of Ireland closest to Scotland and also confusingly known as Dál Riata. Apparently conclusive evidence is provided by an entry in the yearly Annals ►

■ Dunadd, in the Kilmartin Valley near Lochgilphead, was the royal fortress of the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata, which stretched from Ardnamurchan to the Mull of Kintyre and across the sea to the north of Ireland. Our illustration is the first to depict Dunadd in such detail.



# THE GAELS



■ What survives of the mighty hill fort of Dunadd today. In the 7th century, this is where the kings were inaugurated. From here they ruled over their sea kingdom, and controlled metal-working and trade with Europe.

of Tigernach, written by Irish monks around the year 500, which states:

*Fergus Mor, mac Erc, with the nation of Dál Riata, held part of Britain, and died there.*

The idea that the Scots came from Ireland has been widely accepted ever since a different version of the story was reported by the English monk Bede in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People in the early 8th century:

*Britain received a third tribe... namely the Irish (Scoti). These came from Ireland under their leader Reuda, and won lands from the Picts... they are still called Dalreudini after this leader.*

Unfortunately, neither of these sources is a contemporary record of events that modern historians can accept at face value. The Annals of Tigernach entry belongs to a stratum of the 10th century entries in a manuscript written down in the 14th century. Bede's account is closer to the events described, but still 500 years after the supposed date of Reuda. Both reflect the perceptions of the time they were written and could well be inaccurate. For this evidence to be accepted, there has to be corroborating evidence, such as that supplied by archaeology which is discussed later.

But how did the Scots get their name in the first place? Scoti was the word used by Late Roman

authors to describe raiders who attacked Britain in the third and fourth centuries from across the Irish Sea. They were thought to be the inhabitants of Ireland, and the term was later applied to all who spoke Irish.

It was probably a racially derogatory term, meaning something like pirates, as this was the context in which the Romans in Britain encountered these people, and so would not have been used by the raiders themselves. Their own word for themselves was Goidi l, the Old Irish form of the modern Gael, which is still used for speakers of both Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

It seems likely that Scoti was applied to all people who spoke Gaelic, as the Romans would have had no means of distinguishing whether raiders came from Ireland or Argyll, except by their language. Thus from an early date Scoti became associated with Ireland, which may have been where many, though not necessarily all, of the raiders came from.

Gaelic is a branch of the Celtic family of languages which includes modern Irish and Scots Gaelic. This type of Celtic is technically known as Q-Celtic, in contrast to the P-Celtic branch which includes Pictish, Welsh, Breton and Cornish. The common language shared by the Irish and the

Dalriadic Scots has been taken as strong support for the idea that the Scots had come over from Ireland as recounted in the origin tales.

The conventional historical account is therefore that the Scots migrated from Antrim to Argyll either around 500, according to the Irish annals, or in the 3rd century AD, according to Bede. They came from a small kingdom called Dál Riata, and the same name was applied to their Scottish colony. They ousted a native Pictish population, and settled much of Argyll.

This picture of Irish colonisation of Western Scotland, and eventually most of Scotland, has recently been challenged by archaeologists. If the inhabitants of Dál Riata migrated from Ireland, there should have been Irish types of objects and forms of settlement in Argyll, but this does not appear to be the case.

The most common form of settlement in Ireland at this time was a small circular enclosure with earth banks known as a ringfort, which probably served for keeping cattle as well as living accommodation. No ringforts are known in Argyll, despite suitable locations being present. Although some stone-walled ringforts, or cashels, are known in Ireland, these are not the same as the Scottish duns, usually on hilltops. Scientific dating of Argyll duns has shown that the type was in use from the early Iron Age, at least 500 BC, through to the early Medieval period, so they cannot have been introduced from Ireland by Fergus.

Crannogs, or artificial island dwellings, are common in Ireland and Scotland, but again recent scientific dating has shown that Scottish crannogs have been built since the early Iron Age, while those in Ireland only appear in the 6th century. This evidence seems to show that crannogs were invented in Scotland and later spread to Ireland.

One of the main ways people at this period could tell who belonged to what group or tribe was in the use of different types of personal ornaments such as brooches and dress pins. Everyone had to wear these to fasten cloaks and tunics, so the designs they used became associated



■ You can stand in the footsteps of the first kings of Scots just below the summit of Dunadd. The carved footprint, the boar carving and the Ogham inscription mark the symbolic inauguration site.



# History books say the Gaels invaded Argyll from Ireland around 500AD. But new evidence indicates they had been in Scotland all along

with different groups.

These brooches also came to be badges of different social classes, and the Irish documents tell us how a gold brooch was suitable for a king, and a silver one for a noble. Most brooches were bronze.

The most common brooch in Dál Riata had rectangular terminals with bevelled edges, but in Ireland the terminals had animal heads. Pins with spiral rings, rather like key-rings, were very common in Ireland, but are almost unknown in Scotland.

Another type of monument which is distinctively Irish at this period is the Ogham stone. This was a memorial stone erected to commemorate an individual – with the name inscribed in an alphabet invented in Ireland consisting of stroke marks cut in the stone. Several hundred of these are found, in all parts of Ireland, dating from the 5th to 7th centuries, but only two occur in Argyll – not enough to suggest that people crossed from Ireland in significant numbers.

In fact there is almost no archaeological evidence to support the traditional view of migration from Ireland, and some evidence to support the view that there was considerable influence in the opposite direction, from Scotland to Ireland. All the evidence points to a continuity of the population in Argyll from the early Iron Age to the medieval period.

How then can we explain the origin tales, and the undeniable fact that Gaelic came to be spoken in Scotland? Language and identity were closely linked at this time as people did not share our modern conception of nations and nationality being related to fixed territories. People saw themselves as belonging to a group of kinfolk, or as descendants of a renowned ancestor, but only as 'Irish' or 'English' in the sense of people who shared a common language.

When storytellers told tales of a people's origin, it was assumed that all those who spoke a common language must have come from the same place – so

the early Scots thought they must have come from Ireland. Other peoples had similar origin legends, some patently absurd to our modern ears. The Picts, for example, were said to have sailed from Scythia, and some Britons traced their ancestors back to the Roman Brutus.

When the first histories and king-lists came to be written down, these stories were reinforced by the invention of suitable ancestors for kings, often stretching far back into prehistory. Painstaking detective work by modern historians has revealed how these stories and genealogies were often adapted by later rulers to serve their own political purposes. For example, in the 10th century the genealogies in the 7th-century *Senchus Fer an Alban* – the History of the Men of Scotland – were rewritten to incorporate the Fergus story.

This was done to try to bolster the claims of one branch of the claimants to the Scottish throne in the political manoeuvrings of the period. The first kings of Dál Riata whose existence we are sure of were Comgall and Gabran, who died around 550.

The Scots thought they came from Ireland because they could speak to and understand people there, but could not understand the Picts or Britons on the other side of the Highland barrier. They did not appreciate that language can change over long periods, and that the language of people who were in close daily contact with each other would develop in the same direction, while the language of people in other areas would develop differently, eventually making them mutually incomprehensible.

This new understanding of history sees the Scots of Dál Riata not as immigrant Irish colonists, but as people who shared a common language with their Gaelic neighbours in Ireland yet had always lived in Scotland. They developed a distinctive culture, and became important enough to give their name to the larger unified kingdom of Scotland after assimilating the Picts in the 9th century. ●



## What's in a Gaelic name?

Place names are a good guide to those parts of Scotland where Gaelic was once spoken. We can tell that greater Glasgow was once such a place from names like Kilmarnock and Kilbride – the 'kil' is derived from *cill*, the Gaelic for church.

The second part of names like Kilbride refer to the saint whose church it was. So the *bride* in Kilbride refers to St Brigid.

Military names are also important, as with Dundee – containing the Gaelic *dunn* meaning fortress. So Dunadd, the stronghold of the ancient Gaelic king Aedan, probably means Aedan's fortress.

Balerno and Balgreen in Edinburgh contain the generic *baile*, which refers to a village or hamlet. Other examples include Balbeg, Balgown and Balfour.

Then there is *achadh*, meaning field, which gives us Auchingray, Auchintoul, Auchindoon, Auchenree and Auchairn.

Landscape features also contain Gaelic origins. A good example is Ben Mor, which comes from the Gaelic *Beinn Mhor* which simply means big hill.

■ Replica brooches, top and right, made using original moulds found at Dunadd.



## Bones, stones and coffee

Kilmartin House Museum stands amid the scattered bones of a prehistoric landscape, where a spinal cord of burial cairns reaches away down the valley towards Dunadd.

Perched on a river terrace, the museum brings meaning and understanding of this landscape and its role in Scottish prehistory.

Visitors are introduced to the Valley of the Ghosts through an evocative audio-visual interpretation of the landscape and societies that lived in it. The visitor is taken back to meet the ghosts and spirit of Kilmartin.

The museum windows look out over the valley floor, framing a prehistoric burial cairn. Beside them, some of the artefacts left within these monuments by our ancestors are layered with

ideas about meanings, symbolism and life within and around the monuments.

The past returns also through reconstructed objects. Visitors can grind wheat, make rubbings of cup and ring marks, polish an axe. The music and sounds of ages gone reach out through recordings of ancient instruments and song.

Museum garden beds feature native plants used traditionally in the kitchen and home.

Visitors can sit in the green oak conservatory, over coffee or lunch, directly overlooking the glebe cairn. The bookshop has a rich selection reflecting the themes and philosophy of Kilmartin House.

The museum, café and bookshop are open all year round, 10 am to 5.30 pm.





■ The ruggedly beautiful Argyll coast, where Dal Riata's principal territory was sea rather than soil, making coracle and boat building vitally important.

**D**ál Riata was a fully-fledged kingdom in Scotland by the mid-6th century, but it is not until the 7th century that detailed information about its society emerges. Dál Riata's early history is uncertain, partly because most contemporary knowledge was recorded orally. It resided in the seers, among whom were poets who depended on their ability to memorise large bodies of information.

Some of the oral material collected in later Gaelic culture is helpful, but it is the written records which emerge later that provide us with the most useful information about Dál Riata.

One remarkable surviving document is the *Senchus Fer an Alban* – or History of the Men of Scotland. Its purpose was to assess the fighting strength of each area in the kingdom. In Dalriadan society, warriors were provided as a kind of tax payment. We know, therefore, that the Gaels had a bureaucracy, kept records, and had literate people capable of writing down such information. The *Senchus* proves that, far from being backward, the Gaels were as socially advanced a people as any in northern Europe.

The *Senchus* also confirms that Dál Riata was a maritime kingdom whose principal territory was sea rather than soil. A group of 20 houses provided 28 warriors who manned two 'seven-bencher' warships. Some of these were known as curraachs, built from a wicker frame covered with cow-hide.

## Despite meagre sources, much is known about the maritime kingdom of Dal Riata

Larger wooden warships are also thought to have been used.

Besides providing the means to launch battle-campaigns, the sea was vital for trade. This the Dalriadans did in abundance, establishing a Europe-wide network. Far from being a so-called Celtic fringe, the early Gael traders were true Europeans who bartered in wine, spices, leather and slaves with peoples from Ireland, Cornwall, France and the Mediterranean. Methods of dyeing,

metal-working and written communication were also exchanged. The emergence of this European ocean highway is easy to appreciate when we consider how awkward the land was.

Without modern roads, the uncompromising ruggedness which gives Argyll its beauty would have rendered overland travel arduous and time-consuming. Even today we can appreciate the difficulties of travelling its steep wooded slopes and long sea-



■ This dun at Ardifuir may have acted as a look-out station for nearby Dunadd.

lochs. Dunadd, the royal centre of Dál Riata, is a three-hour drive from Glasgow even though it's only 45 miles (70km) away as the crow flies.

Dunadd was where the Dalriadans celebrated their kings. During his inauguration, the king underwent a ceremony which represented his marriage to the land. By placing his foot in the footprint carved into the rock, he signalled that the land was both his servant and his master; that would support and nurture his people.

Beside the footprint at Dunadd there are other carvings associated with inauguration – a boar, a rock-basin possibly for libations, an inscription in Ogham, a type of writing invented in Ireland, and possibly a rock-cut throne.

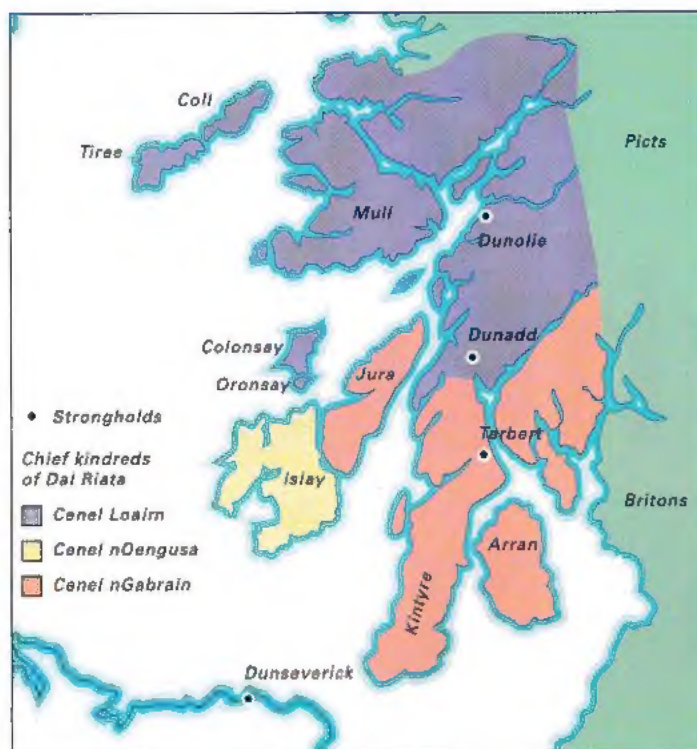
Visitors to Dunadd can gain an impression of its sense of power. From where the crowds gathered on the terraces below, the king would have appeared silhouetted against a magnificent skyline including the distant peak of Cruachan, the sacred mountain of Argyll.

The king was at the heart of Dalriadan society. He was basically head of a huge extended family or kin-group. Each main branch was known as a Cenel, meaning kindred. The clans for which Scotland became famous were based on this system.

The Dalriadan system of royal succession was known as tanistry. A male descendant of a king could claim eligibility to the throne, but the successful candidate had to be elected.



# People in Argyll were at fault with the latest European trends



■ The kingdom of Dál Riata was largely what we know as Argyll.

by nobles from the two leading families, the Cenel Loairn and the Cenel nGabrainn.

The kingdom was strengthened by royal marriages which formed political alliances with other kingdoms. The first Dalriadan king we know much about, Aedan Mac Gabrainn of the Cenel nGabrain, may have married both Pictish and British princesses, and he may have seen one of his daughters married to an Irish king.

Aedan reigned over Dál Riata from about 574 to 608. He had strong associations with St Columba, the two men using their power and prestige to bolster each other's position. His stronghold is reckoned to have been at Dunadd.

The most aggressive of all Dalriadan kings, he led a number of successful battle campaigns against his neighbours. His highly mobile forces fought in Ireland, the Isle of Man, Orkney and the Borders. He was eventually defeated at the hands of the Northumbrians in 603.

Just as ambitious but infinitely less successful was Aedan's grandson, Domnall Brecc, who took the throne in 629. All four recorded battles of Domnall's reign were defeats.

He lost his Irish territories probably as a result of his poorly-judged participation in the battle of Magh Rath in County Meath, Ireland, in 637, and was killed in battle around 642 at the hands of the Britons of Strathclyde.

The Cenel Loairn also provided one

king who stands out, Ferchar Fota, who ruled over Dál Riata in the later seventh century. Centuries later, the fabled MacBeth legitimised his claim to throne by citing his ancestor, Ferchar. Although the Cenel Loairn continued ruling Dál Riata well into the eighth century, they did not share the later MacBeth's good fortune.

Their tenure seems to have been blighted by persistent aggression from the neighbouring Picts. In 736 the Picts captured Dunadd, a crushing blow. Soon thereafter, in 741, the forces of the Pictish king Unust, son

of Urguist, subdued the Gaels during a campaign known as the Smiting of Dál Riata.

This was the beginning of the end for Dál Riata. By the 790s the Gaels were being hammered all across their western seaboard by an invasion whose scale was matched only by its savagery. The Vikings had arrived.

The Gaels were forced into an ever-closer relationship with the Picts which culminated in their unification under Kenneth MacAlpin in 843, a keystone event in the evolution of modern Scotland. ●



## TIMELINE

### 200-550

Dal Riata emerges from uncertain origins. Gaels have strong cultural ties with Ireland.

### 574

Aedan Mac Gabrainn, the Gaels' most successful ruler, is inaugurated at Dunadd.

### 603

After an aggressive period of expansion, Aedan is defeated by the Northumbrians at Battle of Degsastan.

### 642

Domnall Brecc, Aedan's unsuccessful grandson, is defeated by the Britons.

### 650

The Gaels produce Senchus Fer an Alban, a sophisticated tax ledger, four centuries before England's Domesday Book.

### 697

Ferchar Fota, first of the Cenel Loairn to become king, dies. Steady increase in level of Pictish incursion.

### 719

Senchus Fer an Alban records the earliest naval battle in British history.

### 736-41

Picts capture Dunadd and smash the Gaels during the 'smiting of Dál Riata'. Beginning of Pictish dominance in the region.

### 794

Vikings begin invasion of Scotland's western seaboard. Dal Riata's monasteries and villages plundered.

■ Hide-covered coracles were the most common form of transport for Dalriadans.



# Man from nowhere who built a kingdom

**K**enneth MacAlpin came out of relative obscurity to found a royal line that ended with Bonnie Prince Charlie almost a thousand years later. Famed for uniting the Picts and the Gaels, many legends have grown up about him. These produced a contradictory series of tales – few of which can be taken at face value.

Kenneth – or in Gaelic, Cináed mac Ailpín – was born about 800AD, in Dál Riata – which, despite the prestige of Iona, had become a backwater. Most of the kings who ruled in this period paid tribute to the Picts, who were the regional superpower.

The first Viking raids upon Britain and Ireland were taking place at this time. Lindisfarne was burned in 793 and Iona was attacked half a dozen times before 826.

The Pictish heartland escaped serious attack from these early raiders, but the smaller and less well organised kingdom of the Gaels of Dál Riata – where Kenneth was growing up – was thrown into disarray. The one spirited king, Aed the



■ Sword raised in triumph, Kenneth MacAlpin – surrounded by his warriors, the Abbot of Iona, and



White, had died in 778 and none of the rulers who followed him had been able to fill his shoes or stand up to the Vikings or the Picts

Indeed, during Kenneth's boyhood and youth the king of Dál Riata – Domnall (811–35) – was a son of the king of the Picts.

With the Picts controlling the rich lands east of the mountains and the Vikings roving the western seas, the Gaels were caught in a perilous situation

When Unust, king of the Picts, died in 834 he was succeeded by his nephew Drest (834–7), but Drest's accession was challenged by another prince called Talorgan

Drest was supported by his brother Domnall who sent men to his aid from Dál Riata. In the fighting a Gaelic prince, Alpin son of Eochaid, a grandson of Aed the White, was captured and beheaded

This man was the father of Kenneth MacAlpin. In this struggle Drest prevailed, and when he died he was succeeded by his cousin Uuen son of Unust. Meanwhile the kingship of Dál Riata

passed to Aed son of Boanta who remained on good terms with the Picts.

In 839 disaster struck. The Vikings, who had so far left Pictland relatively unscathed, appeared in force and in one huge battle slew King Uuen, his brother Bran and Aed, King of Dál Riata, who had come to help his Pictish friends.

The royal family was wiped out. Uuen and Bran were too young to have grown sons and the succession fell into chaos, no doubt increased by fear of the Vikings. For a while things were held together by a king named Wrad (839–42), who had his royal residence at Meigle near Coupar Angus, but when he died civil war broke out

Fighting raged in the Pictish kingdom for seven years. Amongst the contenders was Alpin's son Kenneth who had succeeded to the kingship of Dál Riata following the slaying of Aed

Neither Kenneth's father, nor his father's father, had been king, but it is quite likely that he was related to the Pictish royal line – the House of Constantín – through his mother or grandmother

As a man of mixed blood he was in an ideal

position to bring the two kingdom's together to face the threat of the Vikings

In the war that followed, Kenneth's main opponents were the sons of King Wrad. The stories vary, but he seems to have invited the last of these, another Drest, to a meeting at Scone, under a flag of truce, and to have treacherously slain him there.

Some later tales portray Kenneth as a conqueror of the Picts, but it seems likely that, although brought up in the Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata, he was at least as closely related to the royal family of Pictland as the sons of Wrad

On the Pictish side, people were probably truly divided in their loyalties – as many supporting Kenneth as supported his rivals. On the Gaelic side, of course, the thought that one of their own might win the kingship of the fertile eastern glens and straths filled hearts with hope of better days to come.

Of course, massacres by the Vikings and years of civil war had led to the death and exile of many of the Pictish nobility, and Kenneth was in a position to richly reward his followers. But no one could have foreseen what followed

Kenneth's final victory in Pictland coincided with the arrival on the west coast of the largest Viking fleet yet seen in these islands. In 849, about 140 longships cruised down the coast on their way to Ireland 'causing great confusion in the whole country'

This proved the last straw for the Gaels of Dál Riata. For more than a generation the islands and promontories of Argyll had suffered from the depredations of these sea-borne marauders, and the people had been pushed to the limit.

The monasteries had been particularly hard hit. It was the saints of Dál Riata, whose bones and memories were revered in these monasteries, who gave the Gaels what was left of their self respect. In recent generations their kings may not have been as glorious as they had once been, but the people could console themselves in the knowledge that it was their saints who had carried Christianity to the Picts and the Northumbrians and that those peoples still honoured them for this

In 849 the kindreds of Dál Riata opened up the tombs of their saints and placed the bones in the shrines that had been made to carry the relics about the churches on the great festivals of the year

As the children of Israel had carried the Ark of the Covenant before them when they left the wilderness and crossed over the Jordan into Canaan, so the kindreds of the Gael carried the relics of their saints before them as they crossed the Highlands into Pictland.

From Kingarth on Bute the kindred of Comgall took the relics of Saint Blane northwards through Cowal and up into Glen Dochart. Then they went down through Strathyre and Menteith, until they came to Strathallan, where they built a new church ►



hereditary harpist, takes the relics of Columba through the glens to Dunkeld.



# In their hatred of a common enemy, the Picts and Gaels forgot about their differences



► for the relics, naming it 'The Fortress of Blane' – Dunblane

The kindred of Loarn carried the relics of their saint, Molluoc, from Lismore – the fairest of the Isles – to Rosemarkie on the Moray Firth, singing the sad songs of exile in time with their oars as they rowed northwards over the still waters of Loch Lochy and Loch Ness.

And from Iona, the greatest of all the churches of Dal Riata, the kindred of Gabrán – Kenneth's own people – took up the bones of the great Saint Columba, and carried them into the country, past the head of Loch Awe and through Strathfillan till they came to Loch Tav, and then down the Tav until they reached Dunkeld.

A great new church had been built at Dunkeld, in Columba's honour, by King Constantin of the Picts more than 30 years before. It was here that Kenneth placed the relics of the Saint, marking as he did so the fusion of east and west that existed in his kingdom.

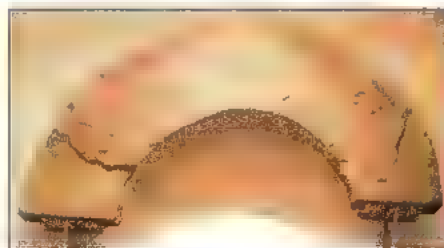
Dal Riata disappears from history at this point. Doubtless some of the Gaels stayed on, but most of the land passed into the lordship of Viking chiefs whose names are lost.

In the chronicles of the time the Gaels of Britain also disappear and for 50 years we hear only of the Picts ruled by Kenneth and his successors.

But how did Kenneth accommodate these refugees and immigrants without driving his Pictish subjects into rebellion? The Gaels were far fewer in number than the Picts and many of them were doubtless settled on land confiscated from the followers of the sons of Wrad after the civil war.

To avoid tensions between natives and incomers, Kenneth also adopted

another policy used by rulers throughout the ages who face unrest and trouble at home. He began a



■ This stone arch is from the palace at Forteviot, where Kenneth MacAlpin died. The figure of a king with sword and moustache could be Kenneth

foreign war. Six times between 849 and his death in 858 Kenneth invaded the kingdom of Northumbria.

The high points of these wars were the burning of Dunbar, a royal fortress of the Northumbrians, and the destruction of Melrose, one of their greatest monasteries for in those days the Forth marked the border between Pictland and Northumbria.

For the most part Kenneth's expeditions were probably confined to the burning of farms and the taking of cattle and young women to be distributed amongst his followers, Gael and Pict alike.

The policy worked, and in their shared hatred of a common enemy the Picts and the Gaels forgot their differences.

When Kenneth died at his palace in Forteviot in 858, he was commemorated as King of the Picts.

At his court the great men of Church and war probably switched easily between Gaelic and Pictish speech, and his chief lieutenants would have been drawn from both peoples.

The Picts were probably glad that they now possessed the bones of their evangelists and probably expected that the Gaels would eventually adopt their language and culture.

None, however, could see what lay before them. Kenneth's sons were young, born after his accession to the Pictish throne, probably to a Pictish mother, and so the kingdom passed to his brother Domnall (858-862).

In death the Gaelic poets remembered Kenneth MacAlpin thus.

*That Kenneth with his host is no more  
brings weeping to every home  
No king of his worth under heaven  
is there, to the bounds of Rome*

■ The Gaelic hell shrine was possibly one of the relics carried by the Gaels to safety. The original iron hell would have been used in an early monastery, and the intricate designs and figures were added in the 14th century.



## TIMELINE

800

Birth of Kenneth MacAlpin in Dal Riata.

834-837

Gaels side with Drest, king of the Picts, in civil war. Alpin, Kenneth's father is captured and beheaded.

839

Uuen, king of the Picts, and Aed, king of Dal Riata slain by Vikings – wiping out Pictish royal family and throwing the succession into chaos. Kenneth becomes king of Dal Riata.

842

Death of Wrad, king of the Picts, plunges the Picts into more civil war over succession. Kenneth emerges as first King of the Picts and Dal Riata.

849

Huge Viking war fleet threatens Dal Riata. Gaels take relics of their saints to Pictland.

849-858

Kenneth invades Northumbria six times. A policy that unites the Gaels and Picts.

858

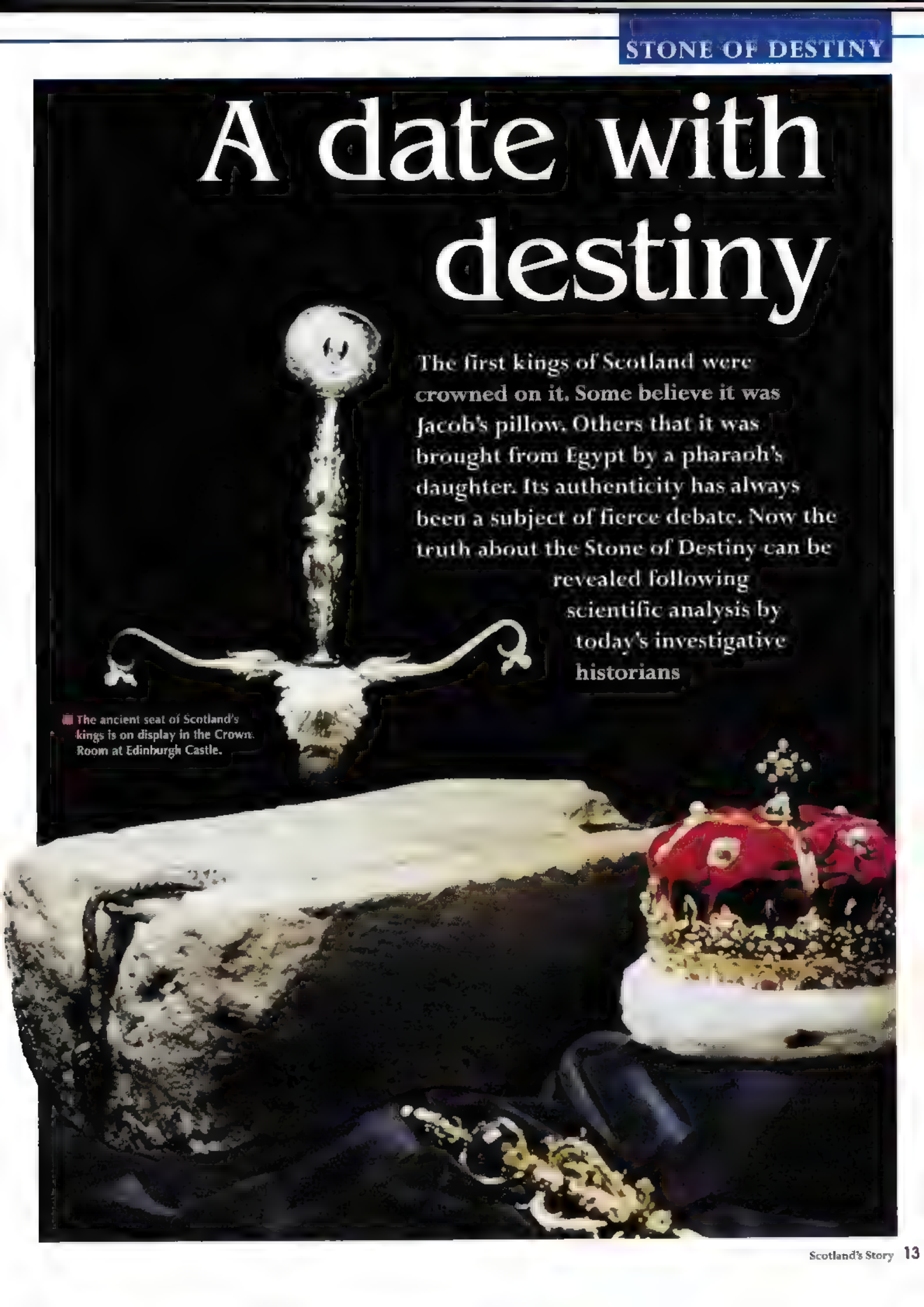
Kenneth dies at his palace at Forteviot.

■ Kenneth MacAlpin, as depicted in the frieze at the entrance to the National Portrait Gallery.



# A date with destiny

The first kings of Scotland were crowned on it. Some believe it was Jacob's pillow. Others that it was brought from Egypt by a pharaoh's daughter. Its authenticity has always been a subject of fierce debate. Now the truth about the Stone of Destiny can be revealed following scientific analysis by today's investigative historians



The ancient seat of Scotland's kings is on display in the Crown Room at Edinburgh Castle.



# 'No king was ever wont to reign in Scotland unless he had first sat upon this Stone at Scone'

There is no doubt that the Stone of Destiny which was returned to Scotland in November 1996 is the genuine article.

Extensive scientific tests and historical research prove that the Stone – which now resides in the Crown Room in Edinburgh Castle – is indeed the ancient seat of Scotland's kings.

Through the ages, many legends have grown up around the Stone. But in the last three years we have learned a lot about its origins and its story.

The Stone has been cleaned and conserved by Historic Scotland, examined by members of the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, and studied by stone conservator Peter Hill. Historians have also investigated documents concerning it.

It is made from a large piece of old red sandstone, more than 400 million years old. Its geological 'fingerprint' is almost identical to other rocks found in the Scone area. So it is virtually certain that the Stone of Destiny was obtained from a spot in, or close to, Scone.

Analysis has shown it to be a complex object. Eight different actions have been undertaken on its surface. It was dressed with a chisel, a start was made to cutting a rectangle on it, the top was smoothed and two crosses etched on it, an iron ring was added at each end and, finally, the iron staples holding the rings were thinned.

These actions make this one of the most complex stone objects ever to come down to us from antiquity. Roman or medieval stones were sometimes re-used, but none is so complex. On this level alone, therefore, the Stone of Destiny is a most important object.

Considering its importance as a seat of coronation, the stone is relatively plain – certainly lacking any significant aesthetic appeal. However, its importance transcends how it looks.

How do we know the stone in Edinburgh Castle is authentic? It is certainly the one removed from

Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1950 – as Ian Hamilton, one of those who took it has said, and earlier photographs confirm.

Its sojourn in Westminster is well documented. Thus, together with its tight seating within the Coronation Chair, supports the view that it remained in Westminster Abbey since taken there by Edward I in 1297.

It was thought that Edward might have been fobbed off with a fake in 1296, but this seems unlikely. Two of his senior officials attended the inauguration of John Balliol only four years before, and saw the Stone. Also, its unspectacular yet complicated form render it an unlikely fake surely such a fake would be more ornate?

There must be a strong assumption that Edward I took the real stone, the one on which Scottish kings had been inaugurated at Scone for centuries. The first record of a king being inaugurated there was in 877 or 878. Scone, however, was a royal seat when Kenneth MacAlpin came there in about 843. Thus the stone may already have been there as a Pictish royal stone.

How does that relate to the legends which associate it with Iona?

There is surprisingly little record of the stone itself before 1296. We have accounts of the inauguration of Alexander III in 1249 and John Balliol in 1292. The fuller account relates to Alexander III and describes how the Stone was placed by the cross in the Scone Abbey graveyard and Alexander was sat on the 'royal throne' – that is, the Stone – and that 'no king was ever wont to reign in Scotland unless he had first sat upon this Stone at Scone'.

It is after the stone's removal from Scone that the legends surrounding it suddenly appear. In one case, a story was clearly invented to strengthen the Scots' appeal to the Pope to help arrange its return. The Scots lawyer in Rome, Baldred Bissot,



■ The end of a long and tortuous road, as the Stone of Destiny is escorted into Scotland at Coldstream in 1996 to start a new and settled chapter in Edinburgh





■ Empty now. The Stone has been twice taken from its compartment under the Coronation Chair at Westminster Abbey – unofficially by students in the Fifties, and more recently with political blessing.

embroidered his brief by adding to it a story that the Stone had been brought to Scotland by Scota, the daughter of an Egyptian pharaoh, and travelled via Spain and Ireland.

So were born the fables that the Stone was Jacob's pillow – impossible, as the rock it is made from is not found in the Middle East – and that it came from Ireland via the earlier Scots settlements in Argyll. The latter connection was supported by the knowledge that Kenneth MacAlpin came from Argyll to Scone and brought various objects.

The truth is more prosaic yet still exciting. The local origin of the Stone strongly suggests it is a Pictish stone, dating to a pre-Christian era and forming part of a pagan ceremony. David I so disliked the pagan elements of the inauguration that he refused to participate until persuaded by his bishops.

We can now try to reconstruct the history of the Stone. Some time after it was shaped into an oblong block a rectangle was cut in its top – perhaps to hold a holy relic. Work stopped when the rectangle's outline was picked out. Possibly the mason had recognised the flaw which led to its break in 1950 when it was removed by Scottish students from Westminster Abbey and decided the work should be abandoned.

Later the iron staples and rings were attached to

the sides. As the inauguration of Alexander III took place in the open – though that of John Balliol was inside the abbey church – it may be that the rings were attached to aid the movement of the Stone at Scone. This is more likely than their addition in 1296, as it would have been more sensible to carry the stone to London in a cart, which is probably what happened.

The thinning of the staples may, however, have been connected with its move to London. The Stone is a very tight fit in the Coronation Chair, as the students were to find in 1950. Walter of Durham, who made the chair, was presumably given dimensions, but someone forgot to include the iron staples on each end. The thinning of these would then result from the need to fit the Stone into the space created.

The strangest aspect of the Stone of Destiny is the smoothing of its upper surface. Peter Hill has suggested that this may result from people walking or kneeling on it. Perhaps it was treated as an object of veneration and the smoothing of its surface is from pilgrims touching it.

The stone remains an object of deep interest and mystery. We can answer many questions about its past, but some remain unknowable. ●

## Why did Edward move it?

From Edward I's point of view, his triumph over the Scots in 1296 was the defeat of rebellious vassals. He sought to remove the talismanic symbols of Scottish nationhood – the Stone of Destiny, the royal regalia, and one of Scotland's most precious holy relics, the Black Rood of St Margaret, which was reputedly a piece of the True Cross.

This followed a tactic he had pioneered in conquering Wales.

From Perth, he ordered the Stone to be taken south to Westminster Abbey and gifted to the Abbey's long-dead patron, Edward the Confessor. At that point, Edward I had no intention of using it as a coronation stone. His intention was to crush the independence of the Scots and keep the stone as a war trophy.

Debate has raged over whether Edward stole the true Stone. One theory even has the Abbot of Scone handing over a drainage cover instead of the real thing.

Whatever its authenticity, the removal of the Stone didn't destroy Scottish kingship. Robert the Bruce at his coronation used what Edward had been unable to remove – the Moot Hill, and the Augustinian Abbey of Scone and its abbot.

Not to be outdone, Edward suggested to the Pope that the Abbey be completely removed from Scotland, a proposal the Pope diplomatically declined.

The Stone continued its exile as the English kings refused to recognise Scotland's kingship. Then, in 1328, the Scots nearly got it back after Robert Bruce had forced the English government to the negotiating table.

Its return was considered until the London mob prevented it.

There was no such snag, however, when in 1996 the UK government acknowledged growing Scottish self-confidence by choosing to return the Stone with no strings attached.

It is now housed safely in Edinburgh Castle, though some Scots feel it would be more appropriate if its final resting place were to be Scone.



# IT'S JUST ANOTHER SATURDAY

Drink flowed in the mead house, and it was time to do or die. But for these bands of warriors it was all in a season's work

One Saturday in the late 6th century, Urien, king of Rheged, mustered his army. Men who owed him military service in return for their farms and livestock poured from the realm's heartland around Carlisle.

They were joined by Britons from neighbouring lands, which Urien – as Overlord of the North – controlled.

These farmer-warriors had come to defend Rheged against the rapacious Angles under their fierce warlord, Aethelric the Flame Bringer.

The two sides lined up against each other at a place called Argoed Llwyfain, which was probably somewhere in Northumberland. An overwhelming sense of nervous anticipation, both exciting and fearful, gripped the thousands who filled the arena.

A fair amount of drink had been taken, and feelings were running high. Before hostilities began, challenges, taunts and battle-cries rang out, first one way, then another. The battle was a long, bloody affair but Urien's men won a resounding victory.

Scenes like these were repeated



■ Fueled by alcohol and furiously driven on by battle cries, the o

countless times in Early Medieval Scotland – as kings sought to gain dominance over their neighbours, to subject the rulers of smaller kingdoms, or simply to raid and extract plunder.

All tribes and kingdoms had their warrior-bands – not professional soldiers for the most part, but farmers, leather workers and brewers of beer, conscripted by their lords and masters

for everything from a cattle raid to full-scale warfare. It was all in a year's work. Seasons came, seasons went, sometimes a man had to be ready to do or die.

Long before Bannockburn, warriors faced the very real possibility of a gory bed. Spears could pierce and gouge. Swords slashed and disembowelled.

The spin doctors of the day, the who wrote to a king's command, naturally emphasised the glory that accompanied the gore.

They praised the valour shown in fighting and in death. Oh, what a life in war. It was very much on-message to prefer 'the blood-soaked field, before marriage feast'.

The poets and sculptors were part of a system which saw battle as a means of creating wealth, power and stability. They upheld the reputations of their lords through praise, and could bring down a ruler through satire.

In return they expected  
Plenty of mead, for celebration  
And splendid lands, in abundance.  
Great possessions, and gold and wealth.  
They were the war correspondents.

## The spear-storm cuckoo

When describing the gory aftermath of battles, the bards were particularly partial to the gulls and crows which feasted on dead warriors.

Norsemen nicknamed these birds the 'spear-storm cuckoos'.

A Dumbarton bard celebrated the death of a Gaelic king of Argyll with the bloodthirsty lines:

*And crows pecked, at the head of Domnall Brecc.*

The court poet of the Britons who defeated Aethelric the Flame-Bringer wrote of:

*Many a dead man, and crows crimson with blood.*

And:

*I saw men stained with blood, down arms before a grey-haired lord.*





# Putting out the Flame

A remarkable record has been handed down to us of the battle at Argoed Llwyfain.

It is a poem written by Taliesin – court poet to Urien, king of the Britons. He describes the banter before battle.

First to speak is the enemy chief Aethelric, whom the Britons called Fflamddwyn or Flame-Bringer.

He shouts to Urien's men to yield hostages, which would mean their submission to his rule:

*Fflamddwyn shouted, big at boasting:*

*"Have my hostages come? Are they ready?"*

*Answered Owain, bane of the East:*

*"They've not come, are not here, are not ready.*

*"And a cub of Coel's line must be pressed hard,*

*"Before he'd render one hostage."*

*Shouted Urien, lord of Yrechwydd:*

*"Let our shield-wall rise on the mountain.*

*"And let our faces lift over the rim,*

*"And let our spears, men, be raised high,*

*"And let us make for Fflamddwyn amidst his war-bands,*

*"And let us slay him and his comrades."*

With that, Urien's men charged and won a decisive victory. Later, Taliesin wrote:

*Asleep is Lloegr's broad war-band,*

*With light upon their eyes.*

Another poet, Aneirin, speaks of the women of the enemy waiting for their husbands and sons to come home:

*Their fighting turned wives into widows;  
Many a mother with tear-filled eyelids.*



War-bands clash in a flurry of steel. Gory scenes like these were commonplace in Early Medieval Scotland.

their day Their graphic and often gory descriptions of ancient battles can still be read in the poetry that has survived the centuries, or seen on stone memorials, such as the 20ft-high Sueno's Stone in Forres, Moray

It is another celebration of battle. The top panel of this amazing stone depicts the arrival of a chieftain and his guards, the lower shows decapitated corpses.

The Invergowrie Stone has a mounted warrior fueling his courage before battle with a horn of mead

Warrior-kings ruled the roost, and churchmen preached crime and punishment

Battle itself was no sin. Battle was good. It was the chief means of creating wealth and power.

Irish annals, for instance, are full of battles fought in Scotland, often with the rarest mention of who was victor, who was vanquished. The conflict itself was the thing worth describing in this ethos of violence.

One rank under a king in the social pecking-order were sub-kings such as the lords had in Atholl and the Orkneys.

Next came the noble families who

gave kings allegiance, and hospitality on their travels – a military aristocracy

And at the bottom of the heap as always – the farm labourers, the slaves, the not so noble bondsmen, the poor bloody infantry

War-bands were made up from all these layers as the kings and nobles demanded, and sometimes mercenaries were hired to join them.

At first, the great kings had only limited contact with the people they ruled. But in feasting, the aristocratic strands came together.

In the Anglo-Saxon mead-hall, or the Gaelic mead-house, drink flowed freely and the warriors were bound to their lord, and to their fate

Young men could pay a high price for their tipples. In the words of a Briton: *After wine-feast and mead-feast they charged, Men renowned in battle, reckless of life*

Another poet said simply that *Their fighting turned wives into widows.*

In these societies where war was part of the staple diet, victory and defeat could truly be measured in bread-and-butter terms.

The king wasn't only a bandit warlord,

he was the man at the apex of the food chain. Winning meant more land for the kingdom, more cattle for the farms. As for losing, obviously that had an immediate and reverse result

But for the warrior bands of the Picts and Angles, the Britons and Gaels, a more lasting effect was that losing could mean sudden death



■ The Invergowrie Stone shows a warrior drinking before battle.



# Written by





# angels

One beautiful book has been lost, but its spiritual neighbour survives. The 600-page Book of Kells is a masterpiece of Western art, and scholars are coming to believe that it was created by Columban monks on Iona

A Welsh priest by the name of Gerald visited Ireland in 1185, and saw in the monastery of Kildare a book which moved him to ecstasy. This is how he described it: "If you look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of the artistry, you will notice such intricacies, so delicate and subtle that you will not hesitate to declare that all these things must have been the work not of men but of angels."

This book has been lost, but another one like it survived in the Irish monastery of Kells, about 40 miles north of Kildare. The

wonderful Book of Kells certainly matches Gerald's description of the Kildare book.

A fabulously illuminated volume containing the four Gospels in Latin, it is the best surviving example of manuscript made in these islands. And scholars are coming increasingly to believe that it was made on Iona, and that it was taken to Ireland around 800 AD, perhaps to protect it from further raids by the Vikings who devastated Iona in 795.

Such a treasure of art and scripture was made in a monastery where there was a terrific devotion to the word of God, by monks who wanted to give it as much glory as their skilled pens would allow. Hence the sumptuous decoration of the calf-skin pages, which still inspire the kind of awe felt by Gerald.

The Medieval monks were not just looking for a book to read, a text to illustrate and make beautiful. Their way of reading the book was not quite the same as our modern way. First, given its

glorious illuminations, and the fact that some of the more decorated lettering is quite hard to read, we must assume that it was not just intended as a handy Gospel book to be read in the ordinary way. It was meant to be gazed at, as much as read. Perhaps it was carried in procession at

solemn moments, held in great honour.

How did the monks read it? How did they use the images?

Scholars are only now beginning to realise how rich this imagery was, alive with many different senses which invited the viewer to seek ever deeper

meanings. Let's take just one image, looking carefully, and follow the monk's train of thought - his meditation.

We reproduce opposite an illustration which is usually called The Arrest of Christ. It does look like Jesus being arrested, at first sight. There is no sign of a struggle. It's a strangely dignified and formal scene, his hands seized by two men. But something is strange about this arrest picture.

In the Book of Kells we don't find it placed beside the story of Jesus's arrest, where we might expect to find it. Instead it is placed beside the earlier Gospel story of the Last Supper, that meal where Jesus took bread and wine and gave them to his disciples, saying: "This is my Body; this is my Blood." So the image ties together two different stories - the Arrest and the Last Supper.

In the Arrest, Judas betrays Jesus, and hands him over to the soldiers. At the

## Quills, skills and devotion

The artist-scribes who worked on the Book of Kells were master craftsmen, wielding brushes and quill pens with impeccable skill.

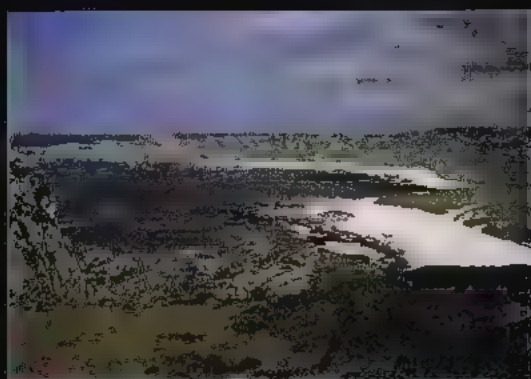
A portrait of St John shows him holding a stylised version of a quill, made from goose or swan tail feathers. Some scribes might also have used sharpened reeds to write on the vellum pages, made from calf skin scraped clean and stretched on a frame.

The brownish ink used on most pages was made from crushed oak apples and sulphate of iron mixed with gum and water, and inkpots probably would have been made from a cow horn.

A black carbon ink was used on several early pages, combined with red, yellow and purple script. If they made a mistake, the scribes scraped it out with a knife.

The painting was done with brushes of various thicknesses, the finest made of marten fur. On many such projects generations of artists used compasses, dividers, set-squares rulers and templates. And no doubt some of the Book's fine decoration required a magnifying instrument.

The most important ingredients, however, were skill, devotion and infinite patience.



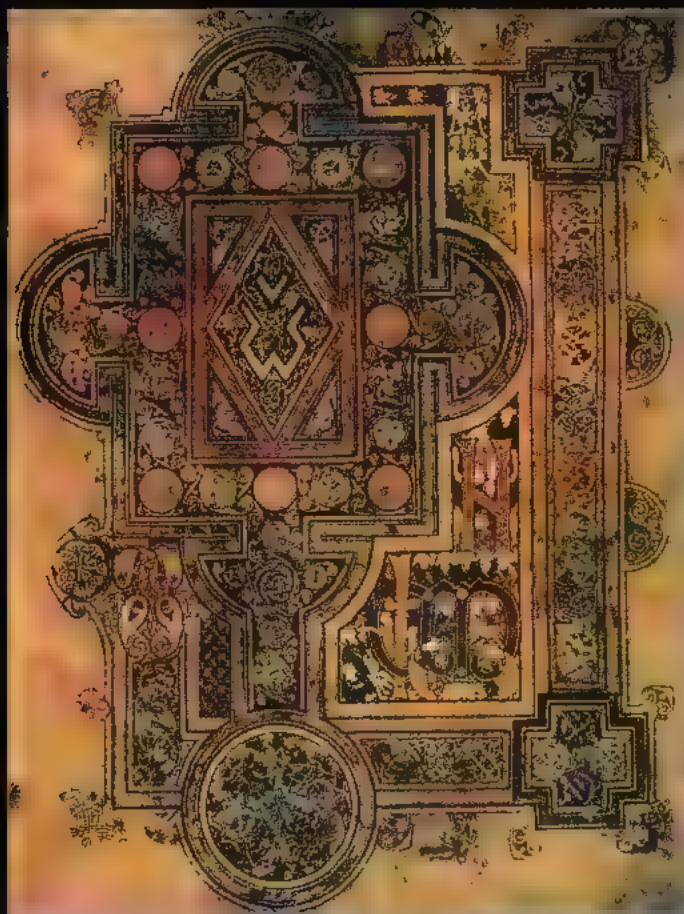
Iona, where the first Columban monastery was established.





[illegible]

■ The initials on this page typify the scribe's high level of artistry.



■ The opening words of the Gospel of St Luke.

It was  
meant  
to be  
gazed  
at, as  
much  
as read

**Last Supper, Jesus hands himself over to his disciples. Our artist is making a serious point: What Judas does by sin and treachery, Jesus turns into an act of love. Judas turned Jesus into a commodity - worth 30 pieces of silver, the price of his betrayal. But Jesus turns it into something different, making a gift of himself instead of a commodity.**

So if the picture shows the body of Christ being arrested, it also shows his body as the Bread of Life which our monks believed was present in the bread blessed and broken by the priests at the altar.

Look again at the picture, for there is more. The writing above Christ's head says 'When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.' So we are invited to think of olives. Perhaps the two figures beside Christ are not just arresting officers or priests. They have branches growing out of their heads. They have become olive trees. And olives, of course, produce the oil that was used in the ancient world for anointing.

So as their branches lean out over the central figure, we can see them as anointing him with oil. And remember, the Greek word for anointed is Christos, and the Hebrew word is Messiah. So these olive trees remind us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God. Look again at the picture... Jesus

stands with his arms spread out, almost in the shape of a crucified man, and there are two crosses in the frame of the picture, one on either side. Surely we are being invited to remember how Jesus died, crucified and with him two others, one on either side. We are reminded that Jesus the Bread of Life is also the crucified one.

**Look again...**

The olive trees might remind the monk of a passage he has read by the prophet Zechariah: "I see and behold a lampstand of gold and there are two olive trees by it, one on the right and the other on its left."

Olive oil was not just for anointing, but also for keeping lamps lit. Look at the lower branches of the trees, as they touch the shoulders of Christ. Surely these are a kind of refuelling nozzle, pouring oil into the lamp and reminding us that he is the Light of the World.

Look again, and imagine yourself in Iona's church around the year 800. You have just seen two young clerics carry this large Gospel book – the Word of God – and lay it on the altar to be honoured by the bishop or priest and by the congregation. So the picture reminds us that Christ is the Word of God held up and presented to us for our honour and reverence. Christ is the Word, whose words are written in the Book of Kells.

These are just a few of the ways of





h̄ter p̄atio

■ The immensely intricate initials of Christ's name from the Gospel of St Matthew.



reading the picture of the Arrest. There are many other meanings here which space does not allow us to explore, but these few initial observations help us imagine how the Book of Kells and other such manuscripts were used.

The Word of God was not to be read simply as a source of accurate information. It was far richer than that. Readers were not people collecting facts about God, but were engaged on a long journey of meditation, imagining, playful exploration and discovery.

For the monks who made this book, and the monks who gazed at it, the Word was not something to be mastered, but rather deep and many-layered which you allowed yourself to sink into.

The alert mind would make more and more connections as it looked at pictures again and again. The praying heart would be moved by different images at different times. You would find yourself in such a book – by losing yourself.



Detail from the Gospel of St Matthew depicting winged symbols of the Four Evangelists in panels.

## A world of colour

**P**regnant insects and a mine thousands of miles from Iona were among the sources tracked by the artists to find the colours they wanted for their masterpiece.

Artists sent messengers to a remote part of Asia to find the blue pigment they had to have. There was only one source of lapis lazuli which could be used for several shades of blue. That was a mine in north-east Afghanistan. Only small quantities came to Britain and other blues had to be created from the plant indigo or from woad, a native of Northern Europe.

White lead and chalk created the whites yellow came from orpiment (yellow arsenic sulphide) and was described in the Middle Ages as gold pigment. It was used as a substitute for gold, and gave the pages a great richness.

The Mediterranean plant *Crotophaga tinctoria* is thought to have provided the organic mauves, maroons and purples, while red lead was used for most of the orange-reds. Another red



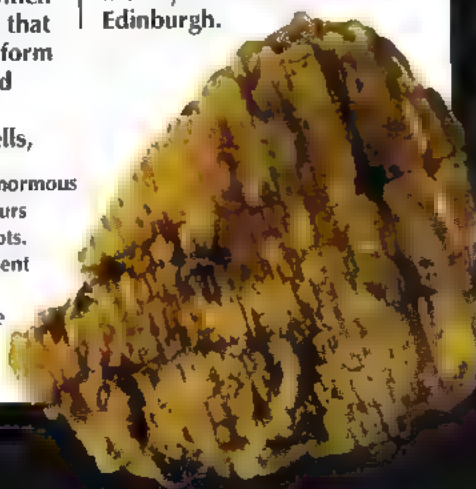
was produced from the pregnant body of a Mediterranean insect *Kermococcus vermilio*.

The artists also wanted the best of vellum on which to write. It is estimated that the book in its original form used the skins of around 185 calves.

Today the Book of Kells,

■ Minerals were brought enormous distances to provide colours for illuminated manuscripts. Orpiment, used to represent gold, came from the Mediterranean. The piece shown here was found at Dunadd.

which was never completed, is displayed in Trinity College, Dublin, where its pages are turned at the rate of one a day. A facsimile is housed in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.



## TIMELINE

**800**

Probable date for the creation of the Book of Kells. In one drawing, a mermaid grasps the name Iona, which is Hebrew for dove. This is a reference to Columba, the founder of Iona, whose name means dove in Gaelic.

**802**

Connachtach, perhaps the first scribe to work on the Book of Kells, dies on Iona.

**806**

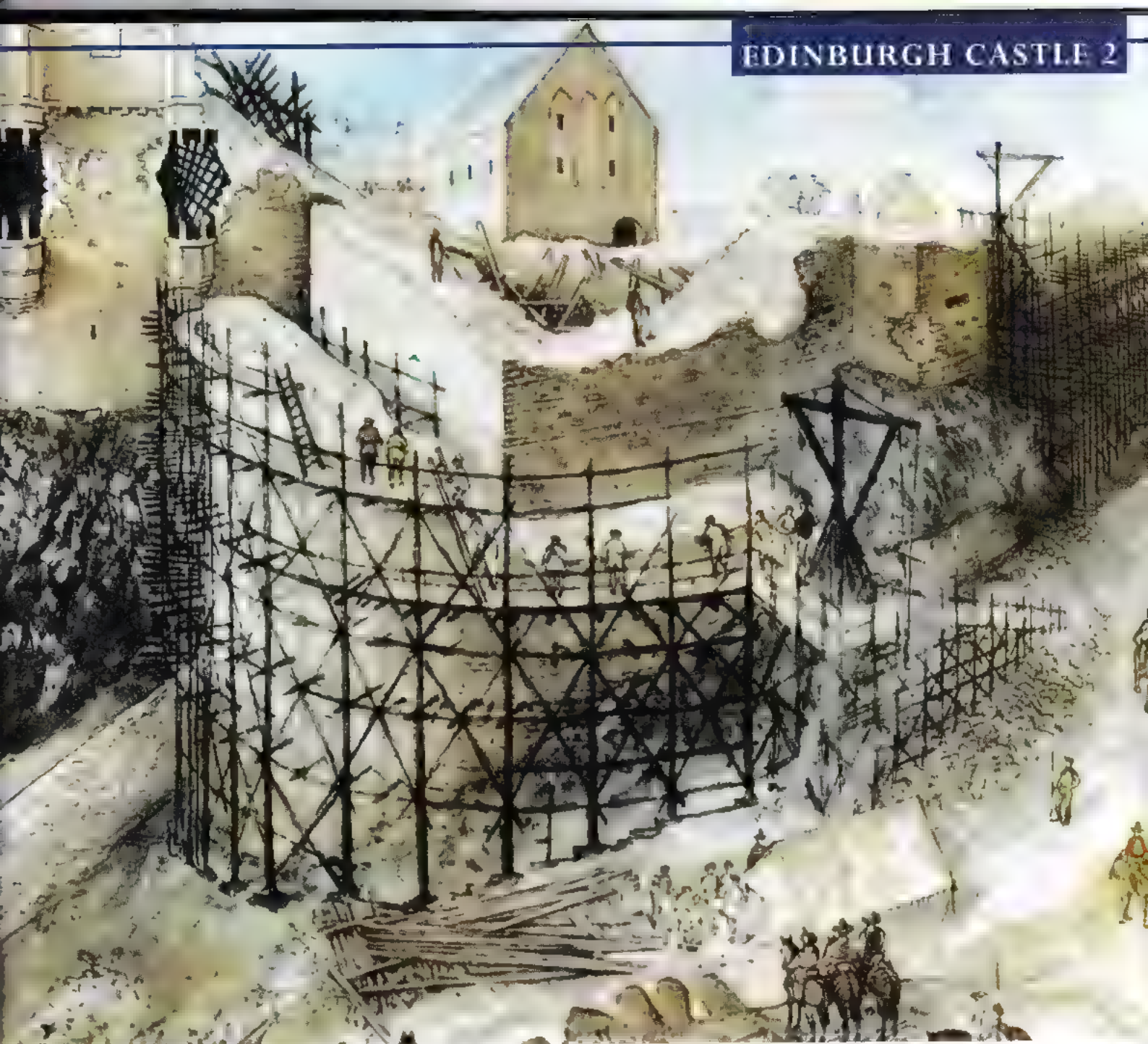
Viking raid on Iona kills 68 monks. A year later some survivors move to Kells and build a new Columban monastery. Breaks in the style of the Book indicate some pages may have been written there.

**814**

The stone monastery at Kells is completed, and Cellach becomes the first Abbot of Iona and Kells.

Next TIMELINE in Part C





■ Reinforcement came in phases. This reconstruction, with St Margaret's Chapel in the background, shows building of Half-Moon Battery after the Lang Siege.

# A tug of war over centuries

After being retaken by Bruce the fortress was levelled to deter raiders. But the English were soon back. Part 2 of the story of Edinburgh Castle

For 20 years the English dogs of war licked their wounds. Then, in 1336, seven years after Robert the Bruce's death, Edward III emulated his grandfather's crushing instincts by unleashing his troops on Scottish soil. Yet again Edinburgh Castle was soon under foreign control, and for five years the English warden Sir Thomas de Rokeby oversaw extensive repairs and a substantial bolstering of defences. It was an ultimately fruitless exercise, as the occupiers were once more defeated by the cunning of the Scottish fighters

A ship that docked in Leith on April 17, 1341, was supposed to be loaded with provisions for the Castle. But it had a cargo ►





## Under the guise of bringing supplies, the ship's crew relieved the English of their heads

entirely unfamiliar with seafaring ways, 200 men led by William of Douglas who had designs on reclaiming what was rightfully theirs.

Disguised as merchants and servants on their way to deliver supplies, some of the men dropped their goods to stop the Castle gates being closed. From a concealed position nearby, the rest of the crew swarmed into the garrison and relieved many of their opponents of their heads.

The Scots had regained the stronghold which had, over centuries, assumed great symbolic importance within the nation.

It had first emerged as a royal castle at the end of the 11th century, and the first meeting of the Scottish Parliament took place there during David I's reign in the 12th century.

Although Edinburgh was not yet seen as the capital, its Castle had become one of

the most important fortresses and royal strongholds when The Bruce ordered its destruction in 1314. Over the next 200 years Scotland was in regular conflict with England, and the castle came under siege on several occasions. But this was also a period which witnessed perhaps its most dramatic facelift and rapid rise in status.

After his release by the English in 1356, King David II returned to Edinburgh to embark on a major rebuilding campaign. His crowning glory was the construction of David's Tower, a magnificent 100ft-high T-shaped building that acted jointly as a royal private lodging and the principal defence of the fortress – a truly monumental structure only completed after the king's death.

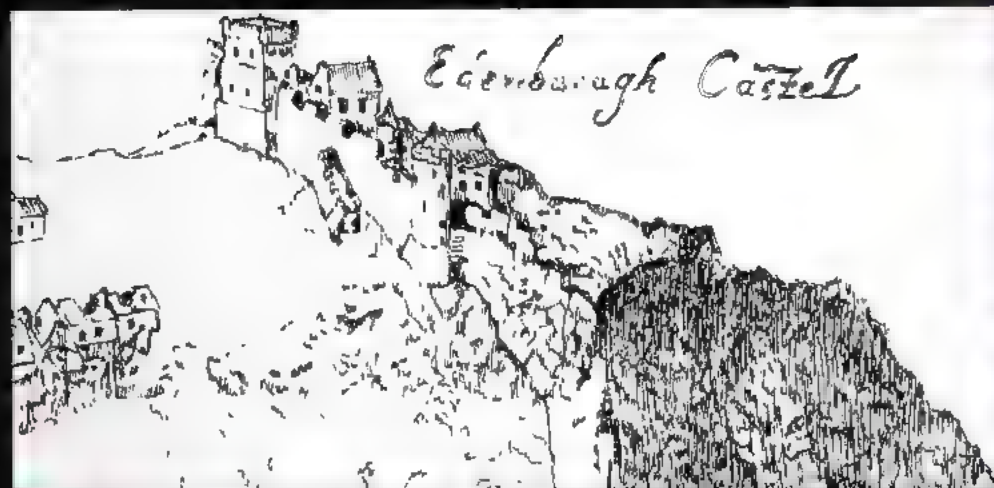
Changes continued, and after King James III officially declared Edinburgh chief burgh of the kingdom, the Castle was

replanned around a new principal courtyard, now known as Crown Square – a mighty undertaking which was probably finished by his son early in the 16th century. Its establishment during the Renaissance, under James IV, which included the building of the Great Hall, created one of Europe's finest royal courts and signalled the evolution of a royal palace within the Castle. It was a place that now stood on a summit of prestige.

Housing a fortress, palace, arsenal, treasury, national archive repository, residences for several officers of state and a prison, the castle had achieved a supreme status. But soon the Parliament started meeting at Edinburgh's tollbooth and royals preferred the more attractive and comfortable Holyrood Abbey.

When James V's ambitious programme of palace building around the country failed to stretch to the Castle's palace, it once again steered away from royal living. Castle Hill was emerging as the place where witches were burned at the stake and public hangings took place but, importantly, the Castle's national significance remained intact throughout the 16th century. Despite being dubbed 'widdy and right unpleasant', it was seen as the proud figurehead of an increasingly prosperous and confident nation.

In 1544 – as Henry VIII attempted to force the future marriage of the infant Scots Queen Mary to his son Edward – English troops bombarded Edinburgh, burning sections of the town and parts of Holyrood Abbey to the ground. It was an ultimately unsuccessful mission which merely exposed the weaknesses of the Castle's ageing defences. Over the next few



■ A drawing of the Castle – showing David's Tower on the left of the main group of buildings – which was made by an English spy in 1544, as Henry VIII prepared his army for a bombardment of the town.



years a massive fortification programme saw the building of new defences, and installation of powerful guns round the perimeter. Such massive security persuaded the Scottish Parliament that the Castle was the best place for Mary Queen of Scots to give birth to her son in 1566, an event of enormous national significance.

Soon after, her marriage to James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, provoked a huge rebellion among the nobility, and Mary was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son, James VI.

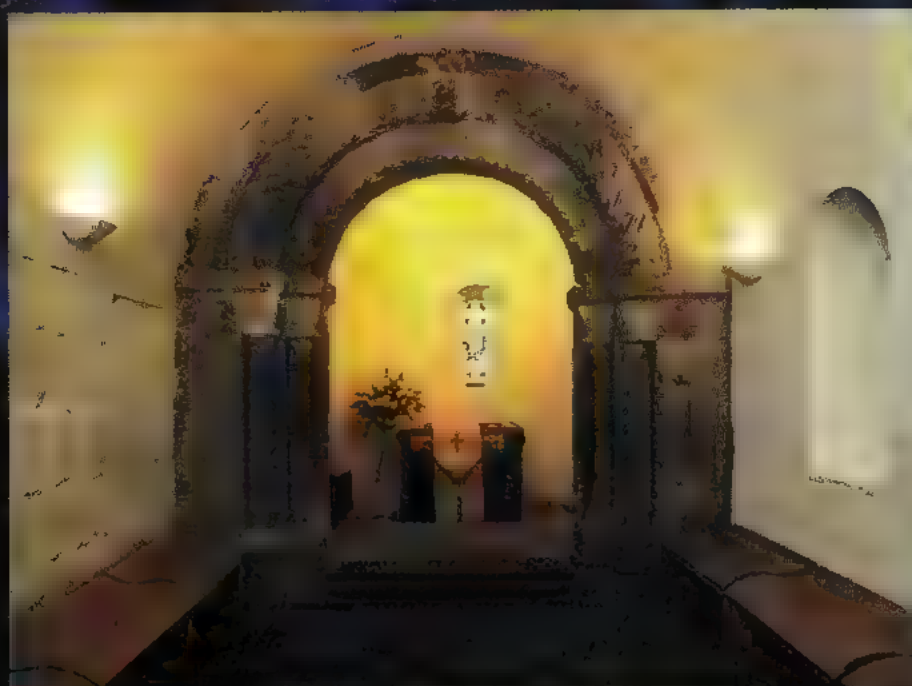
Loyalties were split as the Queen fled Scotland, and by the summer of 1571, Sir William Dring of Kirkcaldy, who had been appointed Keeper of Edinburgh Castle after Mary's abdication, was defiantly holding the fortress in support of the deposed monarch. In what became infamously known as the Lang Siege, he beat off an initial siege by the Regent governing on behalf of little King James. James Douglas, the Earl of Morton, largely because most of Scotland's best artillery was inside the Castle walls.

A stalemate continued until 1573 when the ruthless Douglas asked Queen Elizabeth of England for help to retake the fortress. An English reconnaissance party made the trip north, observed the defences, and reported: "We find there is no mining that can prevail in this rock but only battery with ordnance to beat down the walls and so to make the climb."

Within a few months, Sir William's position of strength had turned to one of imminent danger. In April 1573, a massive siege train commanded by Sir William Drury, the Governor of Berwick and Tweed, arrived in Edinburgh. Six batteries set up all around the Castle walls unleashed a devastating bombardment.

Sir William, however, had lasted two years in service of his queen, and had adequate provisions to hold out even longer. And he was determined to do everything in his power to keep control of Scotland's chief military stronghold. ●

## THE CHAPEL BRUCE'S MEN COULD NOT DESTROY



■ Built in the 12th century by her son David I, St Margaret's Chapel can be visited today.

**S**t Margaret's Chapel, the oldest surviving building in Edinburgh, was built by King David I, who reigned from 1124 to 1153. It was dedicated to his mother, Queen Margaret, long remembered for her caring attitude towards the poor – and canonised more than 150 years after her death.

Perhaps it was out of the deepest respect that Robert the Bruce's men left the chapel intact when they destroyed the Castle in 1314. In the 16th century, it was converted into a gunpowder magazine and used in that role until 1845, when it was restored to its original glory.

Today this tiny chapel is one of the Castle's most popular visitor attractions and contains a copy of the Gospel Book owned by St Margaret.

She was a popular queen during the reign of King Malcolm III, when the feudal system first became firmly established in the country's social fabric. She died heartbroken just four days after learning that her husband and eldest son had been killed in a battle with the English in 1093.



# Climb every



■ Sir Hugh Munro.

**H**e was the man who encouraged the world to climb every mountain, and his reputation as one of the greatest pioneers of hill-walking will live forever.

Sir Hugh Munro was the dogged Victorian sportsman who established Scotland's reputation as a land of hills and a paradise for climbers.

His contribution to the sport of mountaineering was so massive that he left his name on it – every peak which rises over 3,000 feet in Scotland is officially called a Munro.

Although he was born and brought up in London, no one could doubt Sir Hugh's Scottish ancestry. He was born in 1836 as the first of nine children of Sir Campbell Munro, whose estate was at Lindertis, near Kirriemuir in Angus.

The young Hugh spent much of his time north of the Border on the family estate. Even as a youngster, his horizons were broad and foreign travel was a way of life.

At first, it wasn't mountains he collected, but souvenirs. As a child, he had shown a passion for gathering fossils, birds' eggs and butterflies, and he continued to bring all manner of things home as he got older.

He travelled to countries as distant as Greece, Germany, Morocco, Japan, South Africa, Ceylon and the United States,

## Sir Hugh Munro's name is a byword with everyone who knows the hills of Scotland

collecting a whole range of exotic curios, antelope heads, and even a monkey.

It was climbing, however, which quickly became his first love.

He caught the mountaineering bug as a teenager, when he was a student at Stuttgart in Germany.

It was after he had served with the cavalry during the Basuto War in Africa that Sir Hugh began to explore the mountains of his native land.

He inherited the family estate

scale of Scotland's mountains were not scientifically recognised. It was widely believed that there were only about 30 hills in the whole country which rose to more than 3,000 feet.

However, many mountaineers including Munro – felt the real number could be much higher. The very first edition of the Scottish Mountaineering Club's journal implied that the number could be closer to 300 than 30, with many of



■ The view south-west from Stob Choire a Mhail above Fort William.

and his enthusiasm for the mountains really began to take off.

Sir Hugh was a founder member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1889, quickly became its president, and made frequent contributions to its publications.

If he was abroad, then he would travel back from the furthest corners of the Earth simply to attend a club dinner or meeting.

At the time – incredible though it seems today – the sheer size and

these never having been climbed.

To Munro, the temptation of plotting the real height of Scotland's peaks and properly categorising them was too good a challenge to resist. He decided to draw up a definitive list of all the mountains higher than 3,000 feet.

It was a huge job, requiring massive amounts of painstaking research and long journeys into the remotest corners of the Highlands.

But he undertook the task.



# mountain



■ Munro never climbed Skye's Inaccessible Pinnacle, above, but he bagged Ben Lomond - seen left in a view from Ben Vorlich.

willingly and without complaint Munro would often go off on his surveys alone and in all weathers.

He was more of a hill walker than a hardened technical climber, but his enthusiasm never faded. He would walk in his trademark kilt or knickerbockers and cape, and his accommodation en route varied from the luxurious to the monastic.

On one trip to the remote Knoydart peninsula in the West Highlands, Munro stayed in a lodge with the local laird. The next night he camped in a small, filthy hut with only oatmeal to eat.

After this, he walked to Glen Quoich Lodge, lunched with the local factor and then hitched a lift to Fort Augustus. The next day he took a steamer up Loch Ness to Drumnadrochit before heading to Loch Duich via the Falls of Glomach.

After travelling on to Glenelg via the Five Sisters range, Munro continued on to catch the train back down to Glasgow, where he connected with the sleeper for London. It was the kind of travel programme which would have exhausted lesser men, but his enthusiasm for the hills was such that it didn't bother him.

Munro did not, however, seek to make things harder for himself than necessary. In the late Victorian era, Scotland was an increasingly popular holiday and sporting destination - particularly for the English - and the country's transport infrastructure grew rapidly. He took advantage of this whenever he could, travelling by train and by motor car where possible.

By 1891, his initial survey of the peaks over 3,000 feet - carried out with the help of Ordnance Survey maps - was complete, and he

published his list. He calculated that there were 238 peaks and 583 tops, or secondary peaks. Inevitably, the peaks quickly became known as Munros.

One of the main problems Sir Hugh faced was defining exactly what a separate mountain was, since many have more than one peak. He determined that to qualify as a Munro, the summit had to be at least a quarter of a mile from any other summit, and there had to be a drop of at least 500 feet between tops.

During his lifetime, Munro climbed every one of the Munros he surveyed and categorised, with the exception of just two summits.

He never managed to get to the

reason was not because of its difficulty, but its relative easiness.

This particular mountain was comparatively near to his estate at Lindertis, and would have been an easy day out for him. For this reason, he kept it to last, but died before he got round to attempting it. In fact, later surveys have shown that it isn't a Munro at all, and it has now been demoted to a top.

Munro may have been fascinated by the mountains, but he also had plenty of other things to occupy his life. When his father died, he inherited a baronetcy, and became a passionate Tory Unionist politician in Forfarshire. He was also a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

By 1914, when the Great War

never managed to climb all the Munros. The first man to do that was a clergyman - the Reverend Archibald Eneas Robertson, who completed them all in 1901.

Munro did not lay down strict criteria to categorise the mountains, and his original table of 1891 has been changed as surveying methods have become more accurate. The number of Munros has been increased by 39 to 277 and the number of tops reduced by 66 to 517, but the basic structure of his 1891 table remains intact.

Why was Munro's categorisation so important? Because it offers climbers an enormous, and yet manageable, challenge.

Bagging all the Munros remains an awesome feat, but it can be done.

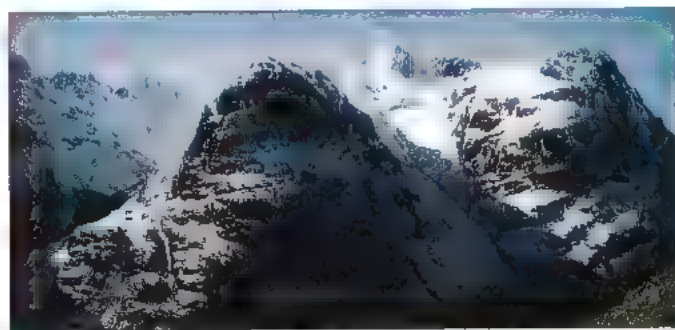
If there were many more peaks, the task would be too daunting. Any fewer, and the challenge would be too easy.

The nature of Munro's - some might say nature's - selection of Scottish peaks is also such that the challenge of climbing them all is open to highly experienced hill-walkers almost as much as mountaineers.

Most people do use ropes for the toughest sections on some of the peaks, but the only Munro where specialised climbing equipment is needed is when descending from the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye.

In creating his tables, Sir Hugh Munro did not just show himself as one of the greatest adventurers of Victorian Britain, he also provided pleasure and challenge for tens of thousands of people.

For as long as people yearn to conquer the highest parts of this country, his legacy will remain. ■



■ The towering, snow-covered peaks of Bidean nam Bian at Glencoe.

top of perhaps the most difficult and notorious peak of them all, the so-called Inaccessible Pinnacle of Sgurr Dearg on Skye. It was really only bad luck that stopped him. Every time he tried to climb it, atrocious weather drove him back.

If he had ever been lucky enough to tackle it on a good day, he would almost certainly have conquered it.

The other mountain he failed to climb was Carn Clochmhuill in the Cairngorms. Ironically, the

broke out, Munro was 58 and well past military age. But he volunteered for service anyway, and spent the four years of fighting working with the Red Cross in Malta. In 1918 he went on to Provence to tend the wounded and organise a military canteen. But he caught a chill in the spring of 1919. This turned into pneumonia, and he died.

Munro's contribution to mountaineering can never be overestimated, even though he



# Cruel tyrant who died the way he lived

**Brutal town guard John Porteous relished the fettering of a doomed man's wrists on the hangman's scaffold. Little did he know that he was sealing a similar fate for himself at the hands of an angry city crowd**

Edinburgh's street mobs were legendary in the 18th century. They had their own ideas of fair play and their own ways of achieving justice. These rough-and-ready qualities reached a peak in 1736 with what came to be called the Porteous Riots, when the mob took a terrible revenge on a local tyrant while trying to avoid what's now known as collateral damage.

It began with the arrest of two smugglers, Wilson and Robertson, for robbing an Excise officer in Fife. To the street mob, of course, smugglers were useful if not heroic members of society, while Excise officers were the opposite. The two men were taken to Edinburgh, sentenced to death, and locked up in the Tolbooth in the custody of the Town Guard.

At that time these municipal policemen were mainly Gaelic speaking Highlanders, wielding Lochaber axes and frequently drunk. They were no friends of the mob. Neither was their captain, John Porteous, who was an arrogant, short tempered man and a brutal husband. When the two smugglers were allowed to attend church before the hanging, Robertson made a successful break for freedom while the guards were obstructed by the congregation and by Wilson.

Thus Wilson's heroic stature was increased. On the appointed day, as he was being taken to the scaffold in the Grassmarket, Porteous fettered his wrists so tightly that he shouted in pain. The watchers began to show their anger. They stood quietly enough while Wilson did his death dance at the end of the rope and was cut down by the hangman after 20 minutes. A relative rushed forward with the faint hope of reviving the dead man and when the Town Guard tried to stop him, the crowd's anger spilled over.

Stones were thrown and it's believed that Captain Porteous drew his pistol and fired, killing one citizen. The other guards, who had been armed specially for this occasion, then fired their muskets into the crowd, killing three people outright and fatally wounding others. Some people watching from their tenement windows were also hit, and as the guards retreated up the steep West Bow, the mob continued to pelt them with stones. The town guards fired again, killing another three.

This was too much for the city fathers. Porteous was dismissed from his post and 30 of the guards also arrested. The magistrates wanted to charge Porteous with murder, but on the Lord Advocate's



■ The Edinburgh mob falls upon Captain Porteous.

advice he was put on trial for ordering his men to open fire "without just cause". He was found guilty and the sentence was the same: death by hanging.

Surprisingly, however, Queen Caroline in London, Regent for George II, granted a stay of execution. Boiling with righteous anger, the Edinburgh mob went into concerted action. First they locked the two city gates so no troops could enter. The Tolbooth door was too tough to break down, so they set it ablaze. Meanwhile, passers by were politely asked to keep out of the way.

Porteous was dragged from his cell and taken to the Grassmarket. On the way, the mob opened a ropemaker's shop and selected a suitable length of his product, leaving the exact sum in payment for the tradesman to find next morning. Then Porteous was hanged from a dyer's pole.

No prosecutions followed this short, violent but popular uprising.





# Reforming laird fled to escape Botany Bay

**George Kinloch**

If you had to be on the run from your government's wrath, this was not a bad way to do it. Perthshire laird George Kinloch had chosen Paris as his bolthole and rented a little flat. His wife and family joined him for a while, and friends from Scotland were there at the time. Apart from the fact that he couldn't go home, the snag was that he had to live under an assumed name – Smith. But how did George Kinloch, a well-respected landowner from Strathmore, get himself into this situation?

He came from a family which had made a fortune in Jamaica from sugar plantations and rum distilling. Tuberculosis was the curse of his blood line, and George was orphaned at seven in 1782, inheriting Kinloch House and 250 acres near Meikle. He was determined to have a useful life and pressed for the development of Dundee harbour and the spread of the rail network. He was also a firm believer in parliamentary reform.

At the start of the 19th century, Westminster's system was simply corrupt. Votes could be bought and sold by wealthy men, and Kinloch was one of very few landowners who believed this must change. Others, however, feared the prospect of a revolution like the upheavals in France.

It was against this feverish background that Kinloch was invited to address a reformers' meeting in Dundee in 1819. He was not an activist, yet his sympathies were known. Ten thousand people turned out to hear him, and his speech was fully reported by the local newspaper. As a result, he was charged with sedition and a warrant issued for his arrest.

The laird was taken into custody by the procurator fiscal from Forfar, an old friend. Kinloch was granted bail, but as court hearings dragged on in Dundee and Edinburgh, it became clear to him and his lawyers that government pressure would make a guilty verdict certain.

With exile to Botany Bay in prospect, Kinloch decided to flee – first calling at a barber's shop to be fitted with a disguise. He headed for Paris by coach and the Dover-Calais packet boat, to begin three years as an outlaw. As we have learned, his exile was far from uncomfortable.

By 1822, though, he turned up in London to test the water. The next year he was able to return to Strathmore, pardoned by the government so long as he expressed contrition. Eight years later a Reform Bill was laid before Parliament, making the essential changes, and the laird immediately became the first MP for Dundee. He died the following year.



■ George Kinloch, the reformer who made his point.

# Songs from a lady's heart

**Baroness Nairne**

The writer of some of the most beautiful and poignant songs about the Jacobite cause was a Scotswoman of gentle birth. Many of her haunting lyrics, such as "Will ye no' come back again?" and "Charlie is my darling", achieved unexpected popularity around 1800 and are still sung today.

At that time it was not considered the done thing for ladies of society to be songwriters, and Carolina Oliphant, Baroness Nairne – who was an exceptional poet as well as a songwriter – chose to keep her secret rather than face what she knew would be the cool disdain of elitist Edinburgh.

So her poems were published under the pseudonym Mrs Bogan of Bogan, and the identity of the author did not come to light until after her death.

The songs gave voice to a strange phenomenon, the



■ Baroness Nairne: poems too.

romantic nostalgia that surfaced in Scotland long after Charles Edward Stewart's cause was lost. It was fuelled also by the cruel subjugation of the Highlands after Culloden and by the Clearances.

Baroness Nairne was one of several writers who mirrored regret for a disappearing culture.

Born in 1766 to the Oliphants of Gask, in Perthshire, a Jacobite family, it is not surprising that she inherited and cherished these political feelings, although carefully keeping them secret in the polite circles where she moved in the Athens of the North during the Scottish Enlightenment.

Many critics have dismissed Carolina Nairne's songs as over-sentimental and ignorant of the facts of the uprising, but no one can deny that they caught the popular imagination of the majority of her contemporary Scots and continue to be enjoyed in the Scotland of today.



# A walk in the footprints of Scotland's early kings



**The Gaels' moving power base is tracked by biker historian David R Ross**

**W**hen the Gaels founded their kingdom of Dál Riata – now modern Argyll – Dunadd was their capital. It is a prime spot, rising out of the Mhoine Mhor – the great moss – an extensive area of flat ground, which would give defenders early warning of a body of men approaching.

Dunadd can still be visited and is signposted from the village of Kilmichael, a couple of miles north of the Crinan Canal. A few tumbledown stones are all that remain of the old fortifications, but there are other artefacts worth viewing.

As you enter the fort, you walk through a passage in the rock into what was originally the lower defensive area. Climbing higher, you find the remains of a stairway leading up to the second defensive area. It is on the summit that some fascinating features remain. On one stone is the imprinted carving of a human foot.

This would have been used in some kind of inauguration ceremony. The people coming to take oaths to the king could carry some of their own soil and pour it into the footprint, to swear fealty while standing on their own 'land'. Or perhaps the king himself placed his foot into the carving, to symbolise his relationship with his kingdom's living rock.

The act does not seem so bizarre when you consider that it was – according to legend – at Dunadd that the Stone of Destiny was kept when it was first brought to Scotland from Ireland, to act as the throne of the King of Scots during the crowning ceremonies.

Also on the hilltop can be seen the outline of a wild boar. This carving faces that of the

foot. The wild boar was the badge of the King of Scots until the time of William I, who changed his standard to that of a Rampant Lion, the symbol we still know today.

The area surrounding Dunadd is full of early Scottish artefacts. A little north at Nether Largie are several old burial cairns, the most impressive of which is known as South Cairn. Nearby stands the Templewood stone circle, where a central monolith is surrounded by eight other standing stones. Just to the north is Kilmartin village in whose churchyard can be found a fine collection of carved stones. There are the two early-Christian Kilmartin crosses, and sculptured stones and gravestones of the Malcolm family, showing effigies of knights in armour.

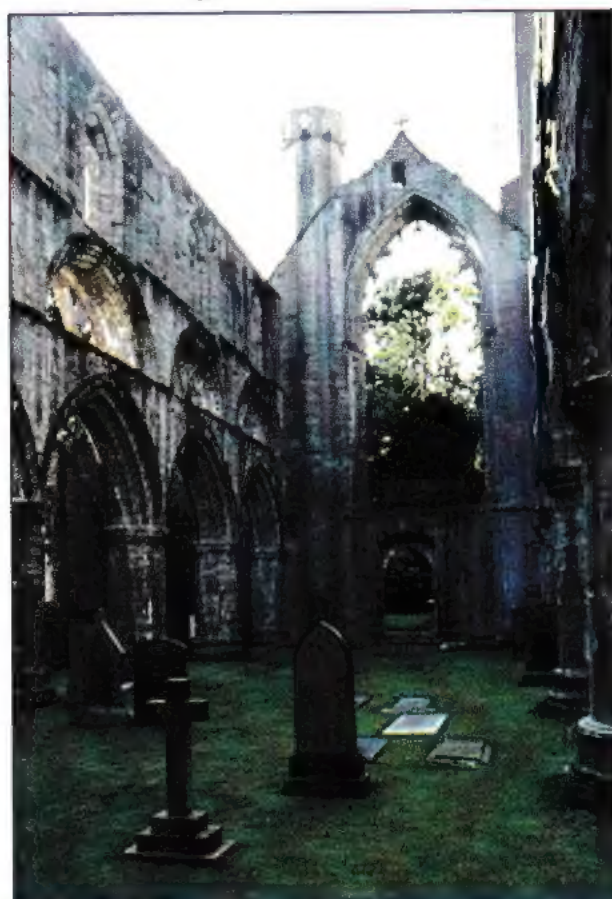
It was Kenneth MacAlpin who moved the Gaels' power base eastward from Dunadd to Scone and Forteviot. Scone became famous as the place where Scots kings were crowned, and although it is centuries since such a coronation, the Moot Hill, where the crownings took place, stands in mute testament of those times, in the grounds of the later Scone Palace.

It is said that Kenneth MacAlpin was at the Battle of Athelstaneford, which gave birth to Scotland's flag. At this battle, a huge white cross appeared across the blue summer sky, and the Picts took this omen – the cross of St Andrew – as a sign of forthcoming victory.

The battle was won and the Picts adopted this sign as the symbol for their nation – it is the oldest flag in the world.

The village of Athelstaneford stands a little north of the A1 at Haddington in East Lothian. MacAlpin transferred his capital from Dunadd to Forteviot, now a modern village six miles south-west of Perth. His headquarters stood on an eminence now called the Halyhill at the west end of the village.

One old chronicle said: "First to reign in



■ Dunkeld Cathedral: the association with Kenneth MacAlpin is strange when he is credited with so much shedding of blood.

Albany, 'tis said was Kenneth son of Alpin, warrior bold. He expelled the Picts, reigned twice eight years and in Forteviot met his death." Another stated that Kenneth "died of a tumour on the ides of February, the third day of the week, in the palace of Forteviot".

He was taken to Iona to join many of his ancestors in the burial ground of the kings. Many slabs or gravestones still lie there.

Very little structural work remains from the time of MacAlpin, but he has one lasting legacy in the Cathedral at Dunkeld. Although the church is said to have been founded by Constantin, King of the Picts, MacAlpin is credited with its completion. He transferred some relics of St Columba here from Iona to protect them from Viking raids. The Apostle's Stone in the cathedral may depict Columba.

Various versions of this holy building have come and gone, but it still stands proud in Dunkeld, and as Kenneth is credited with much shedding of blood in the old chronicles, it is strange that a religious establishment is one of the few relics of his reign.



■ How Dalriadans ferried themselves across the watery kingdom in coracle-type vessels.



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# SCOTLAND'S STORY

NEXT WEEK IN Part 6

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He freed the country from Viking terror. But he is the warrior Scotland forgot

## THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

A thousand years ago Millennium fever was rife, as Christendom awaited the Second Coming

## PILGRIMS' WAY

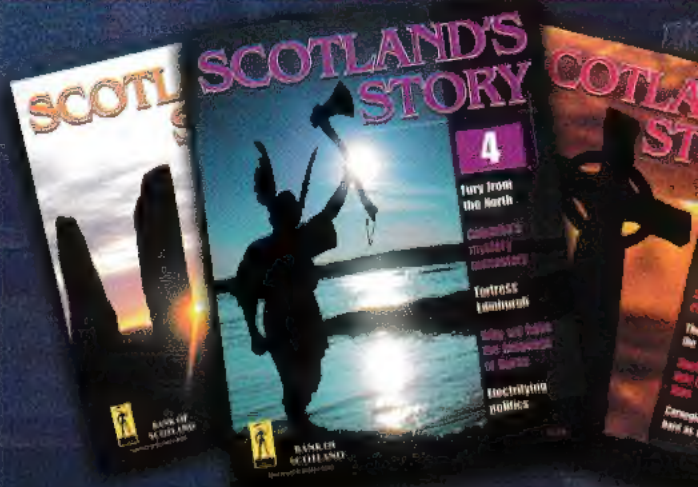
Follow the footsteps of the ancient pilgrims as they criss-cross Scotland from one holy shrine to another

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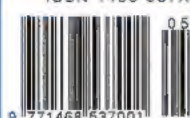
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